

consideration, with claims 1, 7, 9, 13, 17, 21, 25, and 26 being independent.

I. REJECTION OF CLAIMS 1-4, 6-22, AND 24-25 UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 103

Pages 2-17 of the Office Action rejected claims 1-4, 6-22 and 24-25 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Peters, U.S. Patent No. 5,893,098 and Pinter, U.S. Patent No. 5,894, 506.

In the Office Action dated December 24, 2002, the Examiner stated that Peters teaches an electronic news system with the data for a reply to a message independent of the message and inputted separately from the message at Fig. 8, col. 14, lines 45-67, and col. 15, lines 1-30.

Independent claim 1 of the present invention recites a fixed form reply inputted in advance of the message and stored separately from the electronic message, with the message inputted without information about a reply to the message. A benefit of this approach, as one example, is that this can typically result in saving an author time as he is not required to input answers individually. Instead, the author can select pre-established answers from a database.

Figure 8 of Peters, shows that the data for a reply is inputted after the message. For example, the operator enters "Will you be taking leave from work between 1 May 94 and 1 July 94?" and then also enters the following responses, "yes I will be taking leave during this period," "no I will not be taking leave during this period," and "I am not sure at this time." Note that Peters, column 16, line 60 states, "The author (local user) can now go ahead and create the final question in the survey document . . ." Thus, the author is authoring and inputting the question along with the answers following immediately afterward.

Therefore, Peters does not disclose or suggest a fixed form reply inputted in advance of the message and stored separately from the electronic message, with the message inputted without information about a reply to the message. Similarly, Pinter does not disclose or suggest a fixed form reply inputted in advance of the message and stored separately from the electronic message, with the message inputted without information about a reply to the message. In Pinter, responses are chosen along with the message after the message has been prepared, like Peters. Please see the previously filed Amendments for a more detailed discussion of Peters and Pinter. Further, the combination of these two references does not describe or suggest this feature either, as there is nothing in the combination to suggest such a claim element.

Therefore, in view of the above, Applicant submits that claim 1 is patentable over the applied references.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claim 2 (p. 4), claims 3 and 4 (p. 4), and claim 6 (p. 5). The rejected claims depend from independent claim 1. Thus, claims 2-4 and 6 are patentable for the same reasons stated above with respect to independent claim 1. In addition, the dependent claims also recite additional features not taught or suggested by the prior art. For example, claim 2 recites a fixed form reply managing means for managing a plurality of fixed form replies by data for respectively specifying said plurality of replies; claims 3 and 4 recite a control means having means for accepting an input of a free form reply to the message; and, claim 6 recites a control means that includes means for causing the output means to output data for a fixed form reply of the kind which fits contents of the message. It is submitted that the dependent claims are independently patentable over the prior art.

The remaining independent claims, including claims 7, 9, 13, 17, 21, and 25, are amended somewhat similarly to claim 1. For example, claims 7, 9, 13, and 17 recite storing data for a fixed form reply in advance of the message and inputting the electronic message without information about a reply to the message; and, claim 21 recites inputting an electronic message without information about a reply to the message and a fixed form reply inputted in advance of the message. In addition, new independent claim 26 recites storing data for fixed form replies in advance of the electronic message and selecting, subsequent to inputting the electronic message, certain of the replies as the reply choices to the message, somewhat similar to claim 1.

In view of the above, claims 7, 9, 14, 17, 21, 25, and 26 and the claims that depend therefrom, are patentable over the applied references. Applicant respectfully requests withdrawal of these rejections and allowance of these independent claims and the claims that depend therefrom.

IV. REJECTION OF CLAIMS 5 AND 23 UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 103

Page 17 of the Action rejected claims 5 and 23 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Peters and Pinter and further in view of Ginter, U.S. Patent No. 5,982,891.

Claims 5 and 23 are dependent upon claims 1 and 21, which for the above reasons should be allowed over the prior art. Withdrawal of the rejections is respectfully requested.

In addition, the dependent claims also recite additional features not taught or suggested by the prior art. For example, claim 5 recites data for a fixed form reply that is one kind or the combination of plural kinds of data selected from a plurality of kinds including text, still picture, speech, sound and moving pictures; and, claim 23 recites reply sets that can include video or

audio data. It is submitted that the dependent claims are independently patentable over the prior art.

There being no further outstanding objections or rejections, it is submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. An early action to that effect is courteously solicited.

Finally, if there are any formal matters remaining after this response, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned to attend to these matters.

If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Amendment, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

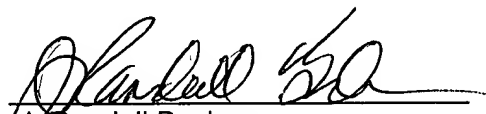
Respectfully submitted,

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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please AMEND the following claims:

1. (FIVE TIMES AMENDED) An electronic news system for managing an electronic message and a reply to said message, comprising:

storage means for storing data for a fixed form reply, inputted in advance of the message and stored separately from the electronic message;

input means for inputting the electronic message without information about a reply to said message;

output means for outputting the message with said data for [a]the fixed form reply to the message retrieved from said storage means, said data for a fixed form reply independent of the message [and inputted separately from the message]; and

control means for accepting only a selection out of the outputted data for a reply as the reply to the message.

2. (AS ONCE AMENDED) An electronic news system according to claim 1, further comprising:

fixed form reply managing means for managing a plurality of fixed form replies by data for respectively specifying said plurality of replies, and

totaling means for totaling a number of the selections of each of fixed form replies as the reply to the message, and storing results of the totalization of each of fixed form replies to the message in relation to said specifying data.

3. (AS ONCE AMENDED) An electronic news system according to claim 1, wherein said control means has means for accepting an input of a free form reply to the message, and managing the inputted free form reply in relation to data to specify said message.

4. (AS ONCE AMENDED) An electronic news system according to claim 2, wherein said control means has means for accepting an input of a free form reply to the message, and managing the inputted free form reply in relation to data to specify said message.

5. (AS ONCE AMENDED) An electronic news system according to claim 1, wherein said data for a fixed form reply is one kind or the combination of plural kinds of data selected from a plurality of kinds including text, still picture, speech, sound and moving pictures.

6. (AS ONCE AMENDED) An electronic news system according to claim 1, wherein said control means includes means for causing said output means to output data for a fixed form reply of the kind which fits contents of the message.

7. (FIVE TIMES AMENDED) An electronic news system including a client apparatus and a server apparatus which manages an electronic message and a reply to said message transmitted from the client apparatus, said client apparatus comprising:

storage means for storing data for a fixed form reply, inputted in advance of the message and stored separately from the electronic message;

input means for inputting the electronic message without information about a reply to said message;

output means for outputting the message with said data for a fixed form reply to the message retrieved from said storage means, said data for [a]the fixed form reply independent of the message [and inputted separately from the message];

control means for accepting only a selection out of the outputted data for a reply as the reply to the message; and

communication control means for transmitting the selection to the server apparatus.

8. (AS UNAMENDED) An electronic news system according to claim 7, wherein the client apparatus comprises means for accepting an input of a free form reply to the message in said control means, and the server apparatus comprises free form reply managing means for managing the free form reply transmitted from the client apparatus in relation to data for specifying said message.

9. (FIVE TIMES AMENDED) An electronic news system including a client apparatus and a server apparatus which manages electronic messages transmitted from the client apparatus, comprising:

said server apparatus comprising:

storage means for storing data for a fixed form reply, inputted in advance of the

electronic messages and stored separately from the electronic messages;

communication control means for transmitting said data for a reply to the client apparatus;

said client apparatus comprising:

receiving control means for receiving said data for a fixed form reply sent from the server apparatus, said data for a fixed form reply independent of the electronic messages[and inputted separately from the messages];

input means for inputting the electronic message without information about a reply to said message;

output means for outputting the message with the received data for [a]the fixed form reply to the message;

control means for accepting only [the]a selection out of the outputted data for a reply as the reply to the message; and

transmission control means for controlling the transmission for transmitting the selected reply to the server apparatus.

10. (AS ONCE AMENDED) An electronic news system according to claim 9, wherein the client apparatus comprises fixed form reply managing means for managing a plurality of fixed form replies by data for respectively specifying said plurality of replies, and communication control means for transmitting specifying data of the selected reply to the server apparatus as a reply, and the server apparatus comprises communication control means for receiving the specifying data transmitted from the client apparatus as a reply, and totaling means for totaling a number of the selections of each reply as the reply to the message based on said specifying data, and storing the results of the totalization of each reply to said message in relation said specifying data.

11. (AS UNAMENDED) An electronic news system according to claim 9, wherein the client apparatus comprises means for accepting an input of a free form reply to the message in said control means, and the server apparatus comprises free form reply managing means for managing free form reply transmitted from the client apparatus in relation to data for specifying said message.

12. (AS UNAMENDED) An electronic news system according to claim 10, wherein the

client apparatus comprises means for accepting an input of a free form reply to the message in said control means, and the server apparatus comprises free form reply managing means for managing the free form reply transmitted from the client apparatus in relation to data for specifying said message.

13. (SIX TIMES AMENDED) An electronic news system including a client apparatus and a server apparatus which manages an electronic message and a reply to said message transmitted from the client apparatus,

said server apparatus comprising:

storage means for storing data for a first fixed form reply, stored separately from the electronic message, [and] independent from the electronic message, and inputted in advance of [separated from] the message;

communication control means for transmitting the data for the first fixed form reply to [tile]the client apparatus,

said client apparatus comprising:

receiving control means for receiving the first data for the first fixed form reply sent from the server apparatus;

storage means for storing data for a second fixed form reply, stored separately from the message;

input means for inputting the electronic message without information about a reply to said message;

output means for outputting the message with said data for the first fixed form reply or the second fixed form reply;

control means for accepting only a selection out of the outputted data for the first fixed form reply or the second fixed form reply based on the category of the message as the reply to the message; and

means for controlling the transmission for transmitting the selected reply out of the data for the first fixed form reply or the second fixed form reply to the server apparatus.

14. (AS ONCE AMENDED) An electronic news system according to claim 13, wherein the server apparatus comprises fixed form reply managing means for managing a plurality of first fixed form replies with data for respectively specifying said replies, and means for transmitting the specifying data of the first fixed form reply to the client apparatus along with

said reply,

the client apparatus comprises fixed form reply managing means for managing a plurality of second fixed form replies with the data for respectively specifying said replies, and means for causing said transmission controlling means to transmit the selected second reply or the selected specifying data of the first reply to the server apparatus as a reply,

said server apparatus further comprises means for transmitting specifying data of the second fixed form reply to the client apparatus, and means for receiving the second reply or specifying data of the first reply transmitted from the client apparatus as a reply in said communication control means, and totaling means for totaling a number of the selections of each reply as the reply to the message based on said specifying data, and storing the results of the totalization of each reply to said message in relation said specifying data,

said client apparatus further comprises means for receiving the specifying data of the second fixed form reply sent from the server apparatus in said receiving control means, and means for outputting the stored second fixed form reply based on said specifying data in said output means.

15. (AS UNAMENDED) An electronic news system according to claim 13, wherein the client apparatus comprises means for accepting an input of a free form reply to the message in said control means, and the server apparatus comprises free form reply managing means for managing the free form reply transmitted from the client apparatus in relation to data for specifying said message.

16. (AS UNAMENDED) An electronic news system according to claim 14, wherein the client apparatus comprises means for accepting an input of a free form reply to the message in said control means, and the server apparatus comprises free form reply managing means for managing the free form reply transmitted from the client apparatus in relation to the data for specifying said message.

17. (FIVE TIMES AMENDED) A recording medium readable by a computer which manages an electronic message and a reply to said message, comprising:

program code means for causing said computer to store data for a fixed form reply in said computer, the fixed form reply being stored in advance of the electronic message and separately from the electronic message;

program code means for inputting the electronic message without information about a reply to said message;

program code means for causing said computer to output the message with said data for a reply to the message, said data for a reply independent of the message [and inputted separately from the message]; and

program code means for causing said computer to accept only a selection out of the outputted data for a reply as the reply to said message.

18. (AS ONCE AMENDED) A recording medium according to claim 17, further comprising:

program code means for causing said computer to manage a plurality of fixed form replies with data for respectively specifying said replies; and

program code means for causing said computer to total a number of the selections of each reply as the reply to the message and store the results of totaling the totalization of each reply to said messages in relation to said specifying data.

19. (AS ONCE AMENDED) A recording medium according to claim 17, further comprising:

program code means for causing said computer to accept an input of a free form reply to the message; and

program code means for causing said computer to manage the inputted free form reply in relation to data for specifying said message.

20. (AS ONCE AMENDED) A recording medium according to claim 18, further comprising:

program code means for causing said computer to accept an input of the free form reply to the message; and

program code means for causing said computer to manage the inputted free form reply in relation to data for specifying said message.

21. (FOUR TIMES AMENDED) A message system, comprising:

a reply data storage device storing a plurality of fixed form reply sets, each fixed form reply set containing a plurality of replies;

an input device for inputting an electronic message without information about a reply to said message;

a controller receiving [a]the message from a host and allowing a user to [select]retrieve a reply from a fixed form reply set stored in the reply data storage device, the fixed form reply set independent of the message, [and] inputted [separately from]in advance of the message, and stored separately from the message; and

an output device outputting the selected reply to the host[,
wherein the fixed form reply sets are stored separately from the message].

22. (AS UNAMENDED) The message system as recited in claim 21 wherein, the controller selects a fixed form reply set based on a category of the message.

23. (AS UNAMENDED) The message system as recited in claim 21 wherein, the reply sets can include video or audio data.

24. (AS UNAMENDED) The message system as recited in claim 21 wherein, the host receives a plurality of the outputted selected fixed form replies and displays a bar graph illustrating a frequency of responses.

25. (FOUR TIMES AMENDED) A computer readable storage medium storing a computer program instructing a computer to perform:

storing a plurality of fixed form reply sets, each fixed form reply set containing a plurality of replies;

inputting an electronic message without information about a reply to said message;

storing [a]the message separately from the fixed form reply sets, the message being inputted [separately from]after the fixed form reply sets;

receiving the message from a host;

selecting a fixed form reply set independent of the message;

allowing a user to choose a reply from the selected fixed form reply set;

sending the chosen reply to the host; and

computing the frequency of chosen replies sent to the host.

26. (NEW) A method of managing an electronic message and reply choices to the

electronic message, comprising:

- storing data for fixed form replies in advance of the input of the electronic message;
- outputting the electronic message with the stored data for the fixed form replies; and
- selecting, subsequent to inputting the electronic message, certain of the outputted fixed form replies as the reply choices to the message.

27. (NEW) The method according to claim 26, further comprising:

- managing the fixed form replies by data respectively specifying the fixed form replies;
- totaling a number of the selections of the fixed form replies as the reply choices to the message; and
- storing results of the totalization of each of the fixed form replies to the message in relation to the specifying data.